A

Tender Salutation

OF

Perfect Love

UNTO THE

ELECT

OF

GOD,

The Royal Seed, the Saints of the Most High, who have believed the Testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, and walks in the Light that hath enlightened every man that comes into the World.

B., E. K

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FRIENDS,

THis following Epiſtle being committed to me, I have found it convenient to diſperſe it on this wiſe to the Churches of Chriſt, for whoſe ſervice chiefly it hath been written as I perceive; and this being a time, wherein each Friend in God ought to ſerve another, and to be a ſtrength and encouragement one towards another in the Wayes of God, and therefore according to my duty, wherein I ſtand bound to the Lord and his Servants, I have diligently endeavoured your benefit and edification in ſending this unto you, who accounts it my greateſt honour to ſerve the Lord and his Servants.

Ellis Hookes.

To the Beloved Church of God that have believed and received the Teſtimony of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; The true Light that Lighteth every man that cometh into the World.

IN the Name and Power of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt bleſſed for ever, the tender Salutations of my immortal Life is daily abounding towards you, who are the true Flock of the Fathers Love and Care, who hath begotten you to himſelf by his Word that lives for ever in us and with us, that ye ſhould be a People Choſen and Elected of him unto eternal bleſſings, and to be a Praiſe and an Honour to him throughout the World, by and through the virtue of his Life and Power, and in the fruits of his Spirit brought forth by you all, who are the only Children of that birth which is only the Lords.

Well dearly Beloved, my heart at this time is filled in the Fathers Love, with the dear Remembrance of you whom the Lord hath gathered with his Arm of power, and in his Spirit do I deſire the encreaſe of all mercies, and peace, and bleſſings unto you, that you may be rich and ſtrong, and wiſe and mighty through the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and receiving daily of his grace, may ever be preſerved, conſtant and faithful in the heavenly calling unto the end; And foraſmuch as the Lord hath began his glorious work in the midſt of you, and gathered you out of the darkneſſe, and ignorance, and unbelief of this World,

where ſometime your converſe hath been, while ye knew not the Lord, and raiſed you up into the Light, and Power and Wiſdome of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, having largely taſted of the ſame in the experience of his leadings through diverſe Operations and Manifeſtations of his Spirit, ſo that many of you have attained to a good meaſure of peace and reſt with the Lord in your inward man; Dearly Beloved, ſeeing it is thus, theſe things the Spirit of the Father in me traveleth to bring forth unto you, for the end to comfort you, and to confirm you, and to edifie you in the ſaving Truths of the Goſpel of peace.

1. Conſider what your former eſtate hath been, an eſtate ſcattered like ſheep without a Shepherd, ſome of you diſperſed into one falſe kind of Profeſſion of Religion, and ſome into another, walking in ſuch wayes as the Lord led you not in, but ye were driven from God into the paths of Death and Darkneſſe, and were led by blind Watch-men in the Hypocriſie and falſe pretences towards God, honouring him with the lips while the heart was far away; this was the condition of ſome of you, and others of you were wallowing in the open prophaneneſſe of the ſinful World, and ſuch was your eſtate wherein you were all ſtrangers to God, and were without him in the World, and ſerved the Spirit which leads Captive to Deſtruction, and in that way you were ſtrayed even in the ſeparation from God, being in the ſtate of enmity againſt him, till the Lord Jeſus Chriſt the good Shepherd of *Iſrael* found you out in the eſtate of darkneſſe, and brought you home from your ſtrayed condi-

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tion, even unto the ſence and feeling of his power and ſpirit in you, which called you out of the wayes of ſin and death, and alſo changed you and regenerated you into the Inheritance of a better Kingdome and glory then that which is of this World, and ye now know Chriſt Jeſus to be your Shepherd, his Spirit to teach you, his Wiſdome and Righteouſneſſe and Sanctification to dwell in you, being partakers of the ſame through the eternal light which once ſhined in darkneſſe, and the darkneſſe could not comprehend it, but now it is riſen in much glory and power, and death and darkneſſe is ſwallowed up of life and light, and the fruits thereof ſubdued; theſe things are true and faithful unto many, let all ſuch rejoyce and be glad in the Lord who have thus ſeen his day, and taſted of his power, and are witneſſes that the Kingdome is come which never fades away.

2. Conſider what the tender dealings of God towards you, and his gentle leadings have been ſince he hath called you out of your former ſtrayed eſtate; hath not his light ſhined upon your Tabernacle with much clearneſſe, perſwading your hearts fully of his way and truth? hath not your hearts often been refreſhed, and your ſouls truly comforted by the refreſhing preſence of the Lord? Hath not the way of life been made ſo clear unto you, and the way of your peace ſo perfectly diſcovered, that no occaſion hath been left of unbelief or ſtumbling unto the upright in heart? Surely the Lord hath not been wanting to you in any of theſe things, but he hath ſo reached home by his Word and Spirit to your

heart

Hearts and Conſciences with ſuch full convictions and perſwaſions in the wayes of Salvation, that no ſincere heart can doubt or waver concerning the things pertaining to his Souls peace and comfort; for ſo large and evident hath Gods Teſtimony been unto you, ever ſince he firſt called you by his Grace, that no man having ſenſe and experience thereof, but muſt bear witneſs that the Lord hath been good, long-ſuffering, full of Mercy and Righteouſneſs towards all that fear him; I am perſwaded ye know theſe things, and that the taſt and virtue of the Lords Mercies and Power remains ſtedfaſt in your remembrance and enjoyment, even his Mercies and loving Kindneſs that have been made manifeſt to you ſince ye have known the Lord, who hath led you by the hand as a Father doth his Children, and carried you in his Arms of Preſervation, and born you on his ſhoulders in all your afflictions, inſomuch that through his Power and Wiſdom onely, we are yet alive, and the Adverſary hath not prevailed againſt us, though his attempts hath often been great to deſtroy us.

3. Conſider what is now your preſent ſtate and ſtanding? How is it with your inward man? In what life and ſtrength and dominion is he? Is he ſtrong over all the corruptible, or is he weak under corruption? Is he in the growth of a perfect man, of the ſtature of Chriſt Jeſus? Is he ſo begotten and born in you, that life hath ſwallowed up death? Hath he victory over the grave, and doth he reign in you, even the new man, the ſpiritual man, the immortal man, Chriſt in you, is he come in power and dominion to dwell with you?

you? Dearly Beloved, mind each Particular in what ſtate you are, and what is your preſent ſtanding to God-wards? Have ye had faith in God, and love to God, and boldneſs for God, and are ye firmly continued therein, or is any ſuch weakened and decreaſed in theſe things? Is your love grown cold, and your zeal loſt, and your confidence decayed? if it be thus with any, their preſent ſtate is not aright before the Lord, but they muſt repent & return to their firſt love, and return again to the witneſs of the Spirit of Chriſt within them that their ſtrength may be renewed, for they onely that dwell with the Lord in faithfulneſs and abides in Covenant with him muſt ſee his Glory, and be fed daily with the Bread that comes down from Heaven, and refreſhed with the Fountain of endleſs Mercies; if ſo be ye be perfect with the Lord after your inward man, ſtrong and lively and zealous, faithful and conſtant, having a clean heart and a pure conſcience, guiltleſs and undefiled before God, this is to be perfect with the Lord, and if ye are thus, bleſſed are you; if ye be encreaſed daily in the Love and Life of the Father, if your inward man grow in the Wiſdom and Power and Knowledge of the Creator, if ye receive the aſſurance of Eternal Life in your ſelves; If this be your preſent ſtate, Oh happy people, who is like unto you, becauſe ye are ſaved of the Lord.

4. What is the preſent work of God in your own hearts? Ye muſt alwayes feel the Word of God abiding in you, even the Word in the heart; hear that Word and do it alwayes, and your ſouls ſhall live by the Word of God; that Word beats down

down whatsoever tempts and draws from God which would defile you, and load your Consciences, and vex the Spirit, for if any obey the Temptations, they become darkned, unbelief enters, and the fruites of it grows, and then there is a falling from the Lord, and a departing from his way of Salvation; therefore mind the Power and Spirit of Christ in you, and be constant and faithful therein, that you may be preserved unto the finishing of the Work of the Lord in you, that at last ye may sit down in the Heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in places of Peace, and Comfort, and Assurance for ever, where the Lord is enjoyed all in all, which you must wait for to be accomplished in you according to the Promise, and you must witness the Work of Christ in you, he must work in you by his Spirit Regeneration, Reconciliation, Sanctification, Justification, and all good things, for it is not sufficient to profess that Christ in his Person hath wrought the works of God, but every one in particular must witness at this day the work of the Spirit of Christ in his own heart, even the Work of Reconciliation and Salvation, that ye may in each mans particular receive the Knowledge and Experience of the Lords Work, of his Love, and Life, and Salvation, and Redemption in particular; for though never so large Testimonies in general should be given to you, or received by you concerning Christ Jesus and his Salvation, yet the particular feeling of the Love and Power of God in your own hearts must you stand by in the Day of Tryal, for that alone can uphold in the day of Troubles, even

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the Teſtimony of the Spirit of Chriſt unto Salvation, felt in each particular heart.

And ſeeing the Lord hath brought you to the knowledge of his truth, ſo in converſion and regeneration, that many can ſay the Way of the Lord is ſo made manifeſt, that we look not for another, nor are doubtful of the Way of Eternal Life; therefore be eſtabliſhed ſtedfaſt and conſtant in that way, not eaſily moved nor toſſed too and fro with men, nor new Doctrines, nor changeable things, but approve your hearts in uprightneſs before the Lord, by being faithful to the end, faithful I ſay to be and do, according to the meaſure of Light and Grace and Knowledge that God hath already committed to you, that ye may not offend againſt the Grace of God, but may glorifie the Lord in your Souls and Spirits, being joyned in your hearts, and married to the Living God, and the Lord becomes Your Huſband according to the Promiſe; but if any be of a changeable Spirit, ſuch will receive Temptations, and go out of the Covenant of God, and abuſe the gift of God, if their heart be not meek, and lowly, and humble, and perfect in the ſight of God, though there may be a taſt of the Love of God, yet there can be no aſſureance of it if the heart be not aright before the Lord, and faithful and conſtant in his Truth; and therefore all muſt wait to receive the aſſurance of Eternal Life in themſelves, even ſuch an aſſurance of Life, and Peace, and Joy, and Comfort, that there can be no departing away, being eſtabliſhed in the Heir-ſhip never to looſe the Crown, Heirs of the power of God, of his Wiſdom, of his Righteouſneſſe, Inheriters and Poſſeſſors of the Eternal Life, that ye may dwell in the houſe for ever, not onely as Ser-

vants, but as Sons; not onely as such that have tasted of the Love of God, but as such as are born Heirs thereof, and must inherit the same for ever.

Now dear Friends, if this were my last unto You, more then this the Lord hath not to say by me; and last of all in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, I charge all the Saints to be faithful to the Principles and Doctrines which Ye have heard and received, and been taught of Christ through his Gospel. Oh be not inconstant and unfaithful in those Principles and Doctrines which the Spirit of God hath perswaded your Consciences of the truth of; for if any are unfaithful, they deny the Lord of Life before men, and must be denyed of him before the Father; therefore let us put on strength and courage to be faithful and constant in life or death, to follow the Lamb whereſoever he goes, and if we must suffer for our profession and practice of those truths which God hath perswaded our Consciences of the verity of, we shall never be ashamed nor confounded before the Adversary, though we gain Tribulations, Persecutions, yea death it self for the Name of the Lord and his Truth, yet we shall obtain the Crown of Glory which never fades away; and verily all the Sufferings and Afflictions of this present time, are not worthy to be compared to that weight of Peace and Comfort, which is and shall be revealed amongst us.

And as concerning our Obedience to Government, ever since we were a people, Ye know what our Principle and Practise in that case hath been, even to obey all men in all things, either by doing or suffering, if at any time ye are required to do any thing by any in Authority which is not agreeing, but contrary to the Scriptures example of the

Saints,

Saints, and the Spirit of Christ in your own consciences, then ye are to suffer whatsoever, if it be death it self rather then to obey and submit to the doing of that which is contrary to a good conscience, this hath ever been our Principle and Practise since we were a People, agreeing with the practise of the holy Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs in all ages, who rather did suffer grievous oppressions and persecutions, then to obey any command of men in power, by doing any thing contrary to the testimony of the Spirit of God in their own particulars; let us all be like-minded this day, not to do, nor bend, nor be in any wise contrary to the Spirit of Christ that dwels in us, but rather suffer whatsoever may be imposed then to sin against that Light and Knowledge of the Spirit of Christ which he hath given us, but let us keep a clean heart and a pure conscience to Godwards, and therein we shall triumph over all in our inward Man, though our outward man be afflicted, and in this we shall have peace and comfort in God over all our Adversaries.

And as concerning your meetings, the Lord hath given you the testimony of his Spirit in you for the verity and righteousness thereof, though ye should suffer persecution for the same, yet ye have the Spirit of Christ testifying in your hearts that this Way and Practise of meeting together (as our practise hath been) is of God, and he Justifies us in the same, and we have sufficient of assurance by the holy Spirit to stand faithful in that practise of assembling together to worship God.

First, we have the testimony of Scriptures and exple of Saints in the Apostles daies, to prove this practice of Meeting together; The first Christians they

met together in this manner and way as we do now, they met in private houſes, and from houſe to houſe ſeparate and apart from the Publique Synagogues and all other Sects; and it is clear that we have the example of Saints and Scriptures proof for this our practiſe of meeting together.

2. We have our own experience for this diverſe years, how that the Spirit of the Lord hath moved our hearts to aſſemble together, and the preſence and power of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath been amongſt us, and we have taſted of the goodneſſe and love of the Lord, being ſo met together, how often hath the Lord met with us and his countenance ſhined upon us, and our ſouls have been refreſhed, ſtrengthned and comforted in this practiſe of meeting together; theſe things are true, and may confirm us in this practiſe of meeting together, and to be faithful to the end.

3. We have the full perſwaſions of the Spirit of God lively and fervent in our hearts at this moment, that we ought not to neglect the Aſſembling of our ſelves together, but that God requires it of us, and it is his will that his people meet together to worſhip him in Spirit and Truth, ſeparate from all the world even in one Spirit, and in the Name and Power of Jeſus I hope ye are all like-minded herein, and that the ſpirit of Chriſt perſwades your Conſciences in the Truth of that practiſe, therefore be faithful unto God herein, and ſin not againſt the teſtimony of Scriptures and example of the firſt Chriſtians, nor againſt your own experience, nor againſt the admonitions of the Servants of the Lord, who are the firſt fruits unto God ſince the Apoſtacy, and have again and again in the Name and Spirit of Chriſt

Christ exhorted you to meet together; wherefore be faithful to perform your duty to God in that particular whatsoever sufferings should be inflicted upon you by the men of this world.

And as concerning refusing to take any Oath, ye know it hath been our Principle and Practice so to do since the Lord hath given us knowledge of his wayes, and the spirit of the Lord that dwells in us, perswadeth our hearts to deny all swearing, both as it was practised under the Law, according to the command of God, & in the types & figures, & as it is practised among the Christians since the Apostles daies, which is as now practised, Idolatry and Superstition; And I say the Spirit of Christ doth confirm our hearts in this truth, even to deny all swearing, and also we have the expresse command of Christ and of the Apostle *James* forbiding all swearing by Heaven and Earth and all other Oaths, which bears witnesse to the truth of our refusing to swear at this day; likewise we have the Testimony of many holy Martyrs and Prophets since the Apostles daies, who denied to swear on any wise, who suffered for such their Testimony. All which evidences may justly confirm the hearts of Gods people at this day faithfully to hold out their Testimonie of refusing to swear at all, seeing we have a cloud of witnesses that testifie with us, the expres command of Christ and the Apostle; the Testimonie of diverse holie men in diverse ages, who suffered for the same, and the present perswasions of the Spirit of Christ in our own hearts; All which are sufficient to give courage and boldness under all sufferings and afflictions that we may meet withall, for refusing to swear.

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Well Friends, be faithful to God in these and all other things which God hath given you light and knowledge in, and I do warn all to keep a clear conscience, and not to sin against the light and knowledge that God hath given you, either by denying to professe and practise that truth which the Lord hath perswaded your hearts of, or by conforming to any thing which ye know is not of the truth, and this is the way of eternal peace with God; but if any shall through the temptations of the adversarie, and for the love and fear of this world deny the Lord, and renounce good conscience and be unfaithful, such must bear the burthen of the Lords anger because of their back-slidings and revoltings from the waies of God. True it is, this is a day of great trial, yet the Lord is strong and gives strength unto all his people that wait upon him.

And let us be mindful what our controversie is, and with whom, this day our controversie is for the Lord and his truth, to do faithfully and suffer patiently whatsoever the will of the Lord is unto us, & not to renounce and deny the exercise of our pure consciences in those things that God hath perswaded our hearts of the truth of; For if any this day should be unfaithful, either by doing what they should not, or leaving undone what they know they should do; If any deny the Lord and his truth, and conform to the false waies & worships of men, such loses the controversie, and gives the cause of God into the hand of your enemies, which is a fearful abomination, and the controversie is with that spirit which opposeth us in these things which we know are of the Lord. It is with that spirit that we must contend, contend I say by the spirit of the Father,

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in long-ſuffering and patience and good will towards all men, and not with the weapons of this World in envie to any, even with that ſpirit which doth oppoſe our meeting together to worſhip God, and would impoſe Oaths & things upon us contrary to our Conſciences; And theſe things are the main matters of controverſie this day, which the ſpirit of Chriſt in us muſt oppoſe, being impoſed on us by the ſpirit of the world. So all Friends are to mind to be faithful to the ſpirit of Chriſt and its perſwaſions, and againſt that ſpirit which is not of him; for the oppoſition is between the two ſpirits, and none muſt ſay the things required to be forborn or to be done are but ſmall matters in themſelves, and may be done or not done without offence, this kind of reaſoning may be dangerous, and may eaſily divert from the obedience of Chriſt; for we are not to look ſo much at the things in themſelves which are required to be done or to be forborn, as at the ſpirit which doth impoſe upon us in ſuch caſes againſt pure conſcience, if the ſpirit be not of God we muſt not obey it in the leaſt things; for this is indeed the matter of conſcience, not ſo much particular things or actions, as the ſpirit that is not of God, where it requires things againſt good conſcience, for whatſoever that ſpirit requireth, be it little or much in reſpect of the action, it muſt not be obeyed and that for conſcience ſake, for this is a good conſcience that cannot do nor conform to any thing which the ſpirit that is not of God enjoyneth, though therefore ſuffering be inflicted on the outward man. And laſt of all, I do adviſe and exhort that ye have love and unity in the ſpirit of the Lord and one with another, that oneneſs of heart and ſoul and ſpirit may

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be amongst us, being bound up in the holy Covenant of the Father, even willing to do or suffer one for another, and in this spirit of unity the Lord will blesse us, and make us strong and able to go thorow joyfully all our afflictions; but if any strife or division be in the bodie, it weakens the whole, if one member vex another through discord, this is not of the Father but contrary to him, this is not for the fatetie of the body, but bruises it and woundeth it, and may more afflict the soul of the righteous then all outward enemies, and strife and contention arising out of our own bowels, may sooner work an overthrow then all the oppositions that can come from men. Oh therefore as a Brother to some, and as a Father to many, and as a Servant to all, let me entreat and beseech that ye follow those things which makes for peace, that ye love one another as Christ has loved you, and that ye be like minded in all things, even one as the Father and the Son are one, and so shall the blessings of the Lord never depart from you; For dear Friends, the Lord hath never been wanting unto us, but alwaies near at hand to fill us with his riches and treasure; and are not we Vessels of honour, is not his Name in our fore-heads, are not we the flock of his fold? Therefore let us honour him by the works of truth, of love, of mercy, and all the works of righteousnesse, let us bring forth fruits unto the Father, thereby proving that we are true branches in Christ the Vine, and let us give up to suffer all things patiently for the testimony of his Truth written in our hearts; if we live let it be to him only, and if we die let it be for him, having the seal of his good Spirit in us, that whether we live or die, we are the Lords.